

News Release



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Contact: Roy Stearns
(916) 654-7538
Steve Capps
(916) 651-8750

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS CONVENES FIRST-EVER CULTURAL SUMMIT

At stake is the future of countless artifacts, museums and historic sites

LOS ANGELES – Some of the most distinguished preservationists, scholars and museum operators in the state and nation will gather here next week with top state and federal officials for a summit focusing on the status of California's cultural heritage resources.

"These resources are expensive to acquire, maintain and protect, and time is our enemy," said Ruth Coleman, Acting Director of California State Parks. "These resources are not renewable. Once they are gone, they are gone forever."

The Cultural Heritage Summit – to be held Tuesday-Thursday, Nov. 19-21 – will focus on California's historic sites, structures and monuments; art, artifacts and museum collections; libraries and archives; cultural landscapes and archaeological preserves; folklore and folk life traditions, and literature and oral traditions.

The summit was organized by California State Parks, and its State Office of Historic Preservation. State Parks is California's premier historic preservation agency. It operates 47 State Historic Parks in California, and maintains at least 13,000 historic properties – including an estimated 10,000 archaeological sites and 3,000 historic buildings – and some 4.5 million historical artifacts.

The summit is being held in Los Angeles, where the cultural heritage issue is at the forefront after last week's defeat of Measure A, a bond measure that would have provided \$250 million chiefly for improvements in that city's museums. Sixty percent of Los Angeles voters favored the measure, but that fell short of the two-thirds majority vote required.

The summit, however, also comes at a time when about \$128 million is available in state bond funds for cultural and historical projects. The money is from Proposition 40, the bond measure passed by

state voters in March that provides funds for a number of environmental and parks purposes, including cultural and historical preservation.

Museums are extremely popular attractions in California. Nearly 75 percent of Californians visit museums or historic sites an average of 10 days per year, according a 1997 public opinion survey commissioned by California State Parks.

The Cultural Heritage Summit will be held at the Getty Center in Los Angeles, home to the world renowned J. Paul Getty Museum.

“This is an unprecedented gathering of the most distinguished people in the field of cultural and historic resources in California,” said Mary Nichols, Secretary of Resources for the state of California. “The work that begins with this summit will shape the future of California’s cultural heritage resources for years to come.

“Collectively, California’s cultural heritage resources are in jeopardy,” she said. “Committed organizations throughout the state are doing their best at protection and preservation, but we need a coordinated effort and common agenda to prevent the rich history of our past from disappearing.”

Speakers at the summit include Congressman George Radanovich, California Resources Secretary Nichols, Acting State Parks Director Coleman, and Professor Dr. I. Michael Heyman, Chancellor Emeritus of the University of California, Berkeley, and former Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution,.

The range of the summit’s co-sponsors illustrates the importance the cultural communities have placed on the meeting. The co-sponsors are the California Association of Museums, the California Council for the Promotion of History, the California Historical Society, the California Preservation Foundation, the California State Archives, the California State Library, the J. Paul Getty Trust, the Los Angeles Conservancy, the National Park Service, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Society for California Archaeology.

There are about 100 invited participants in the summit. They representatives from the National Park Service, the California Resources Agency, California State Parks, the Chicago Historical Society, the California Historical Society, the Mexican Cultural Institute, the California Council for the Humanities, the Los Angeles Conservancy, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, the California Missions Foundation, the California Association of Museums, the Capitol Area Indian Resources, the Society for California Archaeology, the Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, the Native American Heritage Commission, the Mexican Museum, the California State Parks Foundation and the Irvine Museum.